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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000765

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER, D. TEITELBAUM
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2014
TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR SF ZI MDC
SUBJECT: MDC MP JOB SIKHALA DENIES SPLINTER PARTY PLOT --
ALLEGES ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS

REF: A. PRETORIA 1865

1B. HARARE 716
1C. HARARE 530

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On May 4, maverick MDC MP Job Sikhala denied rumors that he planned to create a splinter party with other high-level MDC officials. Whether or not that rumor is true, Sikhala and MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai currently appear to be at odds -- yet another example of internal conflict distracting the MDC from its mission as an opposition party.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Sikhala said he thought the rumor (Refs A, B) actually originated from within MDC headquarters in Harare by staff members loyal to MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai who sought to discredit him (Sikhala). He said a splinter party would serve no purpose. He was confident he would win the nomination for MDC candidate for MP representing the Harare suburb of St. Mary's -- a position he currently holds. He said that if he lost the nomination, he would run as an independent -- and win.

¶3. (C) Sikhala also alleged that Tsvangirai authorized two plots to kill him recently. Sikhala said Tsvangirai's bodyguards half-cut Sikhala's car tire valves on April 2 in such a way as to make a blowout likely. Sikhala's supporters allegedly saw the bodyguards cut the valves and an accident was averted. Sikhala supporters within MDC headquarters allegedly heard that Tsvangirai loyalists planned to kill Sikhala by throwing a hand-grenade into his house. The grenade was allegedly to be thrown during the attack on Sikhala's house on April 23 (Ref B). Sikhala called the youths who attacked his house on that day, "Tsvangirai's thugs".

¶4. (C) Dennis Murira, personal assistant to the National Chairman, said that under Tsvangirai's orders he had recruited Sikhala into the MDC from the student movement in 1999. Murira said he recently found out that Sikhala and former Zengeza MP Tafadzwa Musekiwa accepted bribes from Central Intelligence Office agents to "not" call protests when the two were student leaders. Murira alleged that Sikhala and Musekiwa both felt compromised, i.e. they were obligated to do the CIO's bidding under threat that the bribes would be made public. Murira said Musekiwa's response to this pressure was to flee to the U.K. He said Sikhala's has been to play his standard role of maverick agitator.

¶5. (C) Sikhala objected publicly to what he called the "imposition" by the leadership of MDC candidate James Makore in Zengeza. Tsvangirai and Sikhala were to meet soon to iron out what appears to be significant bad blood between the two over candidate selection. Sikhala has agitated for primaries to select MP candidates. In an April 29 briefing to diplomats, Tsvangirai suggested that the party was considering primaries. (Comment: This would be an expensive proposal for an already cash-strapped party. It remains unclear how the MDC leadership will deal with this issue. End Comment.) The MDC constitution currently provides for consensus selection of candidates via MDC provincial structure representatives. MDC officials acknowledged that the Zengeza candidate was imposed by the National Chairman, against MDC official rules (Ref C). The move reportedly supplanted another candidate that the MDC Zengeza membership put forth.

Comment:

¶6. (C) It is hard to know what might be true when talking to Sikhala. It is possible he asked Shumba to support him in a splinter party, whether or not he actually intended to form one, simply to demonstrate to Tsvangirai that he was a force with whom Tsvangirai would need to reckon.

¶7. (C) Continued: There are many allegations that various MDC officials have taken bribes from GOZ sources, or have

provided information to the GOZ. It is unlikely such allegations will ever be proven. Rumors like these further demonstrate that various MDC personalities and factions are increasingly jockeying for pole position. As long as these personnel conflicts claim center stage, party business will remain secondary.

SULLIVAN